

THE SACREDNESS OF BUSINESS,

—OR—

COMMERCIAL LIFE.

By REV. CHARLES P. MASDEN, D. D.



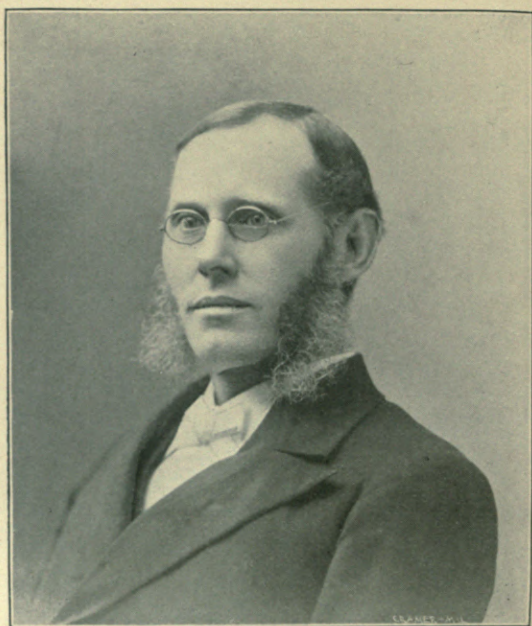


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REV. CHARLES P. MASDEN, D. D.

OFFICE OF  
*Spencerian Business College.*  
*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

WISCONSIN ST. & BROADWAY.

MILWAUKEE, Wis., Nov. 9, 1898.

*Rev. Charles P. Masden, Pastor Grand Ave. M. E. Church,  
Milwaukee, Wis.*

DEAR SIR: The faculty and students of the Spencerian Business College have by unanimous vote instructed me to express to you personally, and to the officers of your church and society, their appreciation of and thanks for the invitation so kindly extended to them to listen to your sermon on the "Sacredness of Business, or Commercial Life."

They were greatly pleased with, and impressed by the address, which, in their opinion, should be widely circulated in the interest of the higher ideals of business life.

It being the special design of this institution to train young people for business pursuits, it is a duty incumbent upon us to promote the higher standards of business education and character, as affecting all the interests of human society and progress. We therefore ask you to furnish us with a copy of the sermon with your photograph for publication.

Thanking you for the service rendered to business and business education, in which we are deeply interested, and with best wishes for your usefulness and happiness, I am,

Faithfully yours,

ROBERT C. SPENCER,

*President.*



*Robert C. Spencer, Esq., President of Spencerian College of Business and Finance, Milwaukee, Wis.*

DEAR SIR: Your kind favor of Nov. 9th, conveying the request of the faculty and students of your college for the publication of the sermon delivered before them on the occasion when they attended divine service in my church, has been duly received.

I fully appreciate the work in which you are engaged in training young people for business pursuits, and, believing that higher ideals and nobler motives than mere *gain*, should be introduced into commercial ethics, I sincerely thank you for your kind offer to extend the influence of the message beyond the hour and occasion of its delivery.

I congratulate you and your College upon your great and deserved success, and wishing you continued prosperity in your noble work, I am,

Yours truly,

C. P. MASDEN.

# The Sacredness of Business

.... OR ....

## COMMERCIAL LIFE.

*By REV. CHARLES P. MASDEN, D. D.*



THE necessity and utility of occupation in human life cannot be called into question. "Of what did he die?" asked Alexander, when some one told him of a friend's death. "Of having nothing to do," was the answer. "That was enough to kill even a general," replied the great conqueror. St. Augustine said "Nothing is so laborious as not to labor." Aristotle has described "Happiness as energy." The old Greeks insisted on labor as a social end. Solon said, "He who does not work is handed over to the tribunals." St. Paul also urges labor not only as a means of self-support and self-culture but also as a benefaction. "Let him that stole steal no more, rather let him labor, working with his hands that which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." St. Paul makes labor the antithesis of *stealing*—"Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him *labor*."

Labor is honorable and ennobling; and, *business* may become more than a drudgery—more than a livelihood—more than occupation—a *divine calling*. Somehow the impression has been made that piety is for Sunday and business for week days, and that the two are divorced—making religion asceticism and business worldliness, and the belief is prevalent that the devil makes the best master on exchange—that piety and worldly success are antagonistic.

My design in this address is to lift business out of the realm of dishonesty into high ethical grounds—transforming the secular into the sacred—and making the livelihood a means of grace and a benefaction.

*Earning a livelihood*, in the competition of modern society, implies *thought*, skill, promptness, truth, honesty, self-denial and the exercise of all the manly virtues. He who is compelled to rise early, exert himself in thought—to be self-deserving and temperate—who must carry himself with self-respect—and so live as to gain the self-respect of others, is a child of fortune. He will be healthier and happier and more virtuous, than if he had nothing to do but eat and drink and sleep and parade.

The *occupation* must not be a *drudgery*—druggery is to be disesteemed. If a man toils as the ox toils, he may count himself brother to the ox. What is a *drudge*? It is the man who performs work by the hand and not by the manhood that is in him. It is the man who works—hating his work—a man who works as if he were a machine. He drudges. He is not honorable. But a man who works with his hand controlled by his head, with a conscience behind his work, is honorable and his labor is full of both manly and moral quality. Hence,



any *honest* occupation can be made honorable and ennobling and worthy of the ministration of an archangel.

The *choice* of an *occupation*, whether husbandry, mechanics, the professions or mercantile life, depends upon the endowments and tastes of the individual. I would not go so far as *Hazlitt*, the essayist, who says, "If a youth has no aptitude for languages, but dances well, hand him over to the dancing master," but I would let *endowment*, *bias*, *affinity*, *taste* have a chance in determining the occupation in life, so as to avoid the deformity and defeat of a misfit—as Lessing's sarcasm defines it:

"Tomkins forsakes his last and awl,  
For literary squabbles:  
Styles himself poet; but his trade  
Remains the same—he cobbles."

Perhaps in no other calling is the proportion of *failures to success* so great as in the *mercantile profession*; only a small percentage of the merchants are successful—all others becoming bankrupt or retiring in disgust. *Why is this?* Is it because they are overwhelmed by sudden disaster which no sagacity could have anticipated or warded off? Is it because they are dishonest and in overreaching others, overreach themselves? Is it because of partial success, they become inflated and build marble palaces and indulge in champagne suppers? In some cases these causes may answer the question, but as a rule it was because they went into *business* without a *business education* and *training*. Lawyers, doctors, ministers, artists, mechanics are made by education and training—*merchants* are not made by *accident*.

So, it will be opportune for me to discuss the *morale* of *commerce* or the *sacredness of business*, and let in the brighter light of gospel truth upon the subject. Hence I invite your attention to three great facts, not generally emphasized in the business world, yet essential principles in business life:

(1) Business is not a *speculation* but a *science*; and, therefore, is lifted out of the realm of *dishonesty*.

Risk and fraud have come into the calculation as factors of success with some men; but, as a general policy it would bankrupt a nation. A man must give an equivalent in work or skill or thought for what he gets or he is a robber of the public good.

While one man grows rich by *speculation* an hundred are ruined. Speculation produces nothing—adds nothing to the common good—only transfers money from one pocket to another. Gambling is not the highest art. Chance is a poor incentive to study and motive to activity. To look upon business as an accident, a chance, a game, is to rob it of its high ethical character. There will be no careful preparation for business life, no moral character to maintain and dishonesty will disfigure all trades. To imagine God blesses such transactions is on a par with a young forger who prayed for success in his villainies.

Mere *speculation*—attempting to suddenly get rich, without rendering an equivalent—cannot find any moral justification, and is sure to curse the individual and the nation.

In settled conditions of business life and in our civilized social relations, the chances for speculation and sudden wealth are diminishing and *ability* and integrity are coming to be recognized as the surest factors of success.

Commerce is guided by laws as inflexible as those of nature, hence political economy should be a study, and business a science and worthy of the most careful and exact preparation. I know that you hear a great deal that will contradict this theory and the very opposite is practiced. If a boy has a bias toward and love for business, the method is to take him out of school, and at once plunge him into the store or office, without any preliminary preparation or future instruction, and let him take his chances, when he knows nothing of commercial law, book-keeping, corporations or contracts, and no wonder, after years of hard and honest accumulation, some smart rogue cheats him out of all his possessions. He is defeated for want of information and knowledge of the laws and methods of trade. You might as well expect to learn the science of *medicine* simply from the practice, without preliminary study, as to learn business, as carried on to-day, by *experience*, without any training in technical business education.

I know you will begin to quote the men who have succeeded in business, and began by sweeping out the store, and in a few years worked their way up to the head of the firm and became merchant princes. But you must bear in mind the *competition* is different to-day. The business world is full of trained and competent business men. Besides, your men of success were strong in natural endowments and great students of business principles and laws and methods. They were competent judges and capable of forming and deciding contracts and agreements, had a good idea of commercial law and generally acted without attorneys. So banish the heresy that business is a chance, and that skill and thorough training



are not requisite. More and more business has become a *science*, requiring skill and ability and integrity; and dishonesty has not so full sway; and, as this thought is magnified, cheating will more and more pass away, and business be placed upon high ethical grounds.

(2) Business is not a mere *livelihood* but a *beneficence*, and, therefore, lifted out of the realm of *selfishness*.

I know the "bread and butter" question is supreme, men must be fed and clothed, and that the great majority rise no higher than this possibility. *Some* do not even reach this level. Among this class are the paupers and the non-producers. Self-support is not only honorable, but self-respect cannot exist without it. To be dependent on another is to dwarf conscious respectability. There is a great deal of polite beggary. Every young man and woman, who has come to maturity, ought to be able, especially if the occasion require it, to take care of themselves.

But while every man must look after himself and we must not relax this responsibility and respectability of livelihood or self-care, yet all this should be a preparation for true benevolence. Every young man should look forward to the time, not only when he can take care of himself, but also when he can take care of some man's daughter. Marriage is a great morality. Looking forward to a pure and happy marriage, or the founding of a virtuous home—is the great safeguard to a young life. Without Christian homes there can be no civilization and morality. But the scope of a man's labor should include more than the support of *himself* and *his family*, the spirit of beneficence should flow to the *community*. The two principles of self-care and benevolence are co-or-

dinated, and work together in perfect harmony. Each makes the other fruitful. You cannot take care of yourself wisely without it. They are reciprocal. He who thinks only of himself cheats himself. He narrows his sphere. Selfishness is a foe to happiness. There is an old story told of an *Italian noble*, who placed a woman in a little niche just large enough for her to stand in, and a row of bricks was laid around her by the masons, and row upon row, and thus a wall encircling her rose steadily up, and finally, when the last brick was laid, she was left standing in her living tomb. Men do the same thing, with golden bricks, until they are smothered. All the man that was in them is dead. Selfishness is a living death—a living tomb. The duty of benevolence runs parallel with acquisition. Riches bring responsibilities. Yet there are men so selfish and centripetal, they begrudge their taxes. I hear that they actually lie about how much they are worth, to avoid taxation. They are mad when they see their neighbor's bees going off loaded with honey from their flowers. If they could they would conceal the perfume from their orchards in summer when they are in blossom. It is a shame for a man to have a good farm and a bad road in front of it. It is a shame for a man to shut himself up in his affluence, saying, "I am independent—let others look out for themselves." The man who does *that* curses himself. If he does not make the park beautiful, the streets luminous and the sewers wholesome, the schools good and the community wise and moral, he depreciates the value of his own property. Hence, the wickedness and folly of the men who begrudge contributions to the public good. Therefore, you see *high motives* may enter into business life. The honor and respect-

ability of self-support so as not to be a robber of the common good. The formation and support of a happy home and a virtuous family. The ability to add something to the welfare of men and the good of the community—the providing for the comforts of men in beautiful parks, clean streets, healthy sewerage, pure water, good schools and useful churches. The ability to help the *unfortunate*—hospitals for the sick, homes for the aged, orphanages and asylums, and all possible shelter and protection for the suffering poor. What high motives—What noble callings—What grander sphere can employ the abilities and industries of men than the honest accumulation and proper distribution of wealth?

(3) Business is not a *secularity*, but a *divine mission*, and, therefore, is lifted out of the realm of mere *materialism*.

It is sacred. It is religious. It is a means of grace. It is a stewardship. It is building for eternity, and laying up treasures in Heaven. A New England merchant waited on his pastor and expressed a desire to do some special religious work—wishing that he could leave business and talk all the time to men about religion. The pastor said, “Go back to your store and sell goods for Christ, and let the world see that a man can be a *Christian in trade*.” Years afterwards the merchant rejoiced that he had followed the advice. The merchant is dead—but the great society that he founded, with a national reputation, and the *college* which he endowed, sending forth yearly its class of trained men, *both* of which received his noble benefactions, are still feeling the result of the wise advice of the pastor and the wise decision of the merchant. Let us look into this question of the divine mission of business: (a) It is a great school for *character*. *Character*



is a moral structure, which has come together with the growth of years, a certain combination of ruling motives, a certain bend of will, a peculiar set of emotional currents, a peculiar sentiment, taste, judgment—all of which grows more and more fixed and distinct in us as the days pass and which our friends mark and note, discuss and classify, criticise and estimate. This character will remain the same in Heaven as *here*. We shall have the same likes and dislikes, same sentiments, same tone, same tendencies, same movements of feelings, characteristics, mannerisms. Before the Judgment Bar our friends will say, "How like himself." This character which is to endure forever is the result of a business life; of *honesty* amid chances of cheating; of *fidelity* amid opportunities for self-gratification; of industry amid temptations of ease; of temperance amid luxury; of humility amid plenty and prosperity; of gentleness amid provocations; of forgiveness amid insult. Plenty of opportunities and means for self-culture in all Christian graces in business life. Business men may train one man for Heaven and another for hell. You remember the picture of our Lord, "Two women shall be grinding at the mill—one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field—one shall be taken and the other left." Every single circumstance identical. They work at the same trade, rise the same hour, dress alike, paid alike, pass life on the same level, nothing *outwardly* to distinguish the one from the other. On and on they go, hand in hand and face to face up to the last—and lo—one is for Heaven and the other for hell—"One taken—the other left." It was out of doing the same thing that one grew ready for the Lord and the other darkened into a slothful servant. The character that is to live in Glory is developed in the sphere of business here.

(b) Business is not only a school for character, but also a *means of grace* to lift the thoughts and soul to God. The counting-room may become a Bethel, and the desk a pulpit. The spiritual man spiritualizes all places, all scenes, all occasions. He often prays for divine guidance in great decisions and thus links his office, by the golden chain of prayer, to the throne of Heaven. He often consults his Elder Brother, the head of the firm. Angels, all unseen, watch his transactions. His thoughts are not secularized—not degraded, and he is his Lord's representative; and all his business transactions are occasions for becoming more and more intimate with his Lord. His activities become wings of devotion. His vision of the Christ remains with him while he does his duty. You remember Longfellow's picture of the *Mediaeval Monk*—praying in his cell, and a vision of his Lord came to him and he revelled in the fellowship of such a Guest—but just then the convent bell rang out the hour of noon, when it was the monk's duty to go and feed the hungry poor at the convent gate—and the question rose in his mind, "Would the vision remain? Would the vision come again?" He left the glorious vision to go and do his duty.

"Like the gate of Paradise  
Seemed the convent gate to rise.  
Like a sacrament divine  
Seemed to them the bread and wine,"

as he fed the hungry poor.

At length returning—

"He beheld the convent bright  
With a supernatural light  
Like a luminous cloud expanding  
Over floor and wall and ceiling—

But he paused with awe-struck feeling  
At the threshold of his door.  
For the vision still was standing  
As he left it there before—  
When the convent bell appalling  
From its lofty belfry calling—calling,  
Summoned him to feed the poor—  
Through the long hours intervening  
It had waited his return,  
And he felt his bosom burn  
Comprehending all the meaning  
When the Blessed vision said  
‘Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled.’ ”

The vision of the Christ, the fervor of the Soul, the luxury of divine fellowship—are not dissipated but *kept*, by a life of duty—by Christian activity, by fidelity in business, as the Lord’s stewards.

(c) Not only can *business* develop character and become the means of grace—but the *immortal and eternal element* comes into it, and the rewards of Heaven transform it, so that its secular character blends with the sacred, and it is a divine mission. Unless this is the case, business will be degraded into a mere secularity and the veil of materialism will dim the vision of the soul. No man can truly believe in immortality who is not living for immortality. He who is without passion cannot believe in enthusiasm. He who is blind has no conception of the stars. A soul plunged in the sensual cannot realize the spiritual. When the whole energies are given to this world, the world to come cannot be a reality. Not so with him who is *living for Heaven*—whose life is spiritual who often by faith and hope makes excur-



sions to the immortal world—he has a transcendent conception of immortality as real as physical life here.

The motive of eternal reward and the power of the invisible must touch us and sway us and inspire us in the activities of human life—or life will break down before we come to victory. Every other motive is too small, too circumscribed and too feeble to sustain the soul up to the point of conquest in this mortal struggle.

You must throw open the pearly gate and let us have a vision of the throne and the crown or you dwarf character, degrade work, dim our hopes, and rob life of proper motive and enduring power, and heroic effort. If all labor is lost who can have the courage to toil? If immortality is not our goal and Heaven our reward, who can hope and endure and conquer? Ambition would die, Heroism falter, Hope grow pale and cease her flights; and human life would be a gloomy scene. Throw open the gate of Immortality and let its light fall upon the fields of human toil and the pathway of human sorrow, and you transform the scene and make Earth a suburb of the New Jerusalem.



